

CONSUMER INFORMATION FROM USDA

Food Safety and Inspection Service, *Food Safety & Consumer Education Office*

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Hurricane & Flood Food Safety

Advance preparation is a key to food safety during a hurricane and the floods that can accompany it.

Those living in hurricane areas should keep adequate supplies on hand because power will likely be disrupted, putting food in danger.

Emergency supplies

- Food and water for 4 to 5 days.
- Hand can opener
- Battery-powered radio
- Extra batteries
- Camp stove or other emergency cooking equipment
- Flashlights, candles, matches, kerosene lamp, fire extinguisher and first aid kit.

Flooding & Food

Flooding often accompanies hurricanes. Persons living in areas subject to floods should be ready to raise refrigerators or freezers by putting cement blocks under their corners. Canned goods and other foods kept in a basement or low cabinets should be moved higher.

Flood waters may carry silt, raw sewage, oil or chemical waste. If foods have been in contact with flood waters, follow the "Safe Handling" recommendations in column 3.

Hurricane "Watch"

If the National Weather Service announces a hurricane watch, expect hurricane conditions within 24 hours. Fill the bathtub and large containers with water. Each person will need a gallon of water daily for 3 to 4 days. Turn your refrigerator and freezer to the coldest setting. The colder the food is before a possible power failure, the better it will last.

It might be helpful to purchase a 50-pound block of dry ice which, when placed in a full 18-cubic foot freezer, should keep food safe without electricity for 2 days.

Dry ice registers -216° F, so rubber gloves or tongs must be used when handling it. Wrap it in brown paper for longer storage, and separate it with a piece of cardboard from direct food contact. Fill a partially empty freezer with crumpled newspaper to cut down on air currents which cause the dry ice to dissipate.

Call Toll-free For More Information

**USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline
1 (800) 535-4555
Washington DC (202) 720-3333**

Also call American Red Cross, Civil Defense or emergency offices.

Safe Handling of "Flooded" Foods

DISCARD:

- Meat, poultry, fish and eggs
- Fresh produce
- Jams/jellies sealed with paraffin
- Home canned foods
- Commercial glass jars of food or beverages including "never opened" jars with waxed cardboard seals such as mayonnaise and salad dressing; corks; pop tops; or peel-off tops.

- All foods in cardboard boxes, paper, foil, cellophane or cloth
- Spices, seasonings and extracts
- Opened containers and packages
- Flour, sugar, grain, coffee and other staples in canisters
- Cans dented, leaking, bulging or rusted.

SAVE:

- Undamaged commercial canned goods are safe if sanitized.

• **To sanitize cans**, first mark contents on can lid with indelible ink. Remove labels: paper can harbor dangerous bacteria. Then wash cans in a strong detergent solution using a scrub brush. Finally, immerse containers for 15 minutes in a solution of 1 teaspoon chlorine bleach per quart of room temperature water. Air dry before opening.

- Sanitize dishes and glassware the same way. To disinfect metal pans and utensils, boil them in water 10 minutes. Discard wooden spoons, plastic utensils, baby bottle nipples and pacifiers.